

**Testimony Re:** Early Voting Implementation and No-excuse Absentee Voting

**H.B. No. 5004** - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING.

**Raised S.B. No. 1057** - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE  
AND EARLY VOTING.

**Raised S.B. No. 1064** - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION ON  
EARLY VOTING.

**S.J. No. 29** - RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE  
CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING.

**H.J. No. 1** - RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT  
TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING.

**Submitted to:**

**The Connecticut General Assembly's  
Government Administration and Elections Committee**

**Submitted by:**

**Yanidsi Velez, New England Regional Director  
Hispanic Federation**

**February 22, 2022**

Good morning, Co-Chairs Flexer and Blumenthal, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and all distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before you today. My name is Yanidsi Velez, and I am the New England Regional Director for Hispanic Federation (HF), a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy.

HF's testimony is also informed by the leading Latino serving community-based organizations and partners across the state committed to improving Latino outcomes. For more than three decades, HF works to empower the Latino community as informed registered voters through our nonpartisan civic engagement and education campaigns. In our work we have seen and



experienced directly the barriers many Connecticut voters face accessing the ballot on Election Day. Many voters are forced to choose between work obligations and their civic duty. Making early voting permanent would alleviate the burden for many Connecticut voters of having to choose between honoring their work commitment and casting their ballot.

HF supports voting centers and early voting best practices for all Connecticut-eligible voters and we advocate for the successful implementation of Early Voting in the state. To do so we must ensure that any implementation of Early Voting guarantee the following provisions:

- Provide at least ten workdays of Early Voting. The Early Voting period should not be interrupted once it begins.
- Early voting centers must include early morning and evening hours and multiple weekend schedules.
- Provide safe and accessible voting centers for the elderly, differently abled, and working families, near public transportation. Walkability for pedestrians and bicyclists should also be considered when selecting a venue.
- Guarantee fair access in all towns by ensuring the number of locations is based on the number of age-eligible voters.
- Allocate full state funding to ensure that the implementation of early voting procedures is comprehensive, and that it includes adequate culturally and linguistically responsive public education and outreach resources for voters

Over the past three years, Latino and other vulnerable communities have faced crushing blows from the economic and public health crises caused by COVID-19. There is no reason for our state to limit absentee voting. In fact, since 2020 we count on robust evidence of the positive impact that absentee voting has had on voter participation in Connecticut. More than 650,000 Connecticut voters voted by absentee ballot in the 2020 CT General Election—which means they voted early on their own schedules. This led to a record-breaking 80% voter turnout.

HF respectfully calls on all members of the CGA to act swiftly and enact these measures S.J. No. 29 - RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING. And H.J. No. 1 - RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING to expand ballot access, protect the fundamental right to vote, and make voting less burdensome by ensuring the most comprehensive Early Voting implementation. This will allow full electoral access and maximize voter participation for every voter in Connecticut.

Connecticut voters should decide how they prefer to vote. For these reasons HF fully supports amending the Constitution of the state of Connecticut to vest the Connecticut General Assembly with authority to expand access to absentee ballots for every eligible voter permanently.

Thank you for your time and consideration.